Researching a World War I Prisoner of War

Since I began working on the WWI Soldiers' Memorial at SPRA, my list of frequently used online sources has grown from about two to more than thirty. There are so many incredible websites pertaining to Canadian soldiers in the First World War. One of my latest and most exciting discoveries is the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) Prisoners of the First World War archives.

I stumbled across this site while researching Private Robert Last Everett, a soldier who settled near Woking after the war. In Pte. Everett's digitized service file (found online at Library & Archives Canada) there was mention of him being captured by the Germans, and I thought it would be neat to see those records and track his journey from camp to camp. I googled something along the lines of "WWI POW Records" and voila, there it was. I could have jumped for joy.

The website is fairly simple and straightforward, although the arrangement used to display the results can be a little confusing at first. There's a search bar right on the home page where you can type in the surname of the POW you're searching for, or you can click "Search for a Person" on the menu at the top and then enter the name (both methods take you to the same place and give you the same results). Be sure to search by surname



only. If the POW you are searching for was a soldier in a non-Commonwealth army, change the option in the Nationality tab. Change it to the country in whose army the soldier served, not where he was born. In the Status tab, you will find only two choices: Military or Civilian. The options in the last tab (Available Files) change, depending on what nationality you chose. This final tab helps you to narrow down the results if you know in what country your POW was held.



Now that you've searched, it's time to filter through the results. It really helps if you know what unit the POW was a part of. I would also suggest clicking on the little question mark labelled "How to find the right person." It'll give you a number of useful tips and tricks for finding the right POW. As you scroll through the results on the left hand side, you'll see that the soldiers are organized by unit, but

luckily the Canadians are in their own little category, so in the case of Pte. Everett, I didn't even have to know the name of his unit. I clicked on "EVERETT, CANADIANS (4)" and it took me to the index cards for

the four Canadians by that surname. The index cards are in alphabetical order, so I found Robert Everett at the end. Hovering over the card, a number of options pop up. Click on "More Information About This Person." Once you've done this, you will again find those handy little question marks which will lead you to an excellent explanation of how to interpret the cards (I would have been lost without this help).

The numbers beginning with "PA" or "R" are the reference numbers you use to find out at which camps your POW was held. ICRC makes this search very simple by having the search bar ready and waiting right on the current page. When you enter one of these reference numbers, it will take you to the record book of the prisoner of war camp where your POW was held. Not only that, it also takes you



to the exact page where the name and information of the soldier you searched for is on. ICRC has been kind enough to provide an Abbreviations Glossary to help translate these pages. You will find the link on the right hand side.

		Ljb. Ne.	b) Botname (nur ber Rufname) c) nur bei Ruffen Borname bes Baters		a) Tempeu- b) tell c) Romp.	b) (Deiangeunagme- b) (Dei unb Keg) c) pothetgespender Auf- enthaltoort	b) Abresse bes nächsten c) Bermandten
	a) b) c)	164	Edwards Arthur	gem	1.Somers	et San.Bruat Ub.Aachen n.Engl.as Gejlg.Stendal	aget.
	a) b) c)	163 X	Edwards James 1531	Corp.	17. kanok	Gejlg.Langensalsa Gejls.Ohrsruf	8,1.16
	a) b)	166	Edwards Dagres.	Gam.	20.J.R.	Nervenlähm. Wb.Konstans s.Jnt. Cassel	.d.Sohwels,Murren
	a) b)	163	Flliosh Alfred		15.Lanc.	chr.Mittelcheiter, Wb.Fonstans s.Int. Cassel	.d.Schwelz,Mürren
	a) b)	160	S2210 John	*	48. Cana	i.r.Arm lahm Ub.Konstans s.Jnt. Gättingen	i.d.Schweis,Mürren
	a) b)		Sllia Victor		Herajor 1	leh. Pestiz.ICčin Gent	
	a)	270	Emerton Dante	Kr.Pru	.North Staff.R A.	. Oejlgis.Oteasen Reals.Stegen	×
10	- b)	122	Entwistle	Con	#tngs 0	m Augenkrk. Ub.Konstane z.7nt. Kannheim	i.d.Schweis, Reg. Chateau d'Oex
1	a) b)	172	Sycrett Robert		50.Cana	t.Rheuma Reals.Rulich Kryuls.Cambrai	
	n	1000	Decem		13.East		Shrewsbury

A lot of information can be gathered about prisoners of war through these records, such as their date and location of capture, the names and locations of the camps where they were held, and personal information such as birth dates and names of next-of-kin. But not only can you search for specific individuals on this website, it also contains a selection of personal accounts, camp reports, maps, photos, and a wealth of fascinating information about life in internment camps.

Originally featured in Telling Our Stories, March 2017 Contributed by Kaylee Dyck